

SERIAL STORY 5 WOULD KILL

BY TOM HORNER

CAST OF CHARACTERS ARNOLD BENTHORNE — Five persons wished him dead. HELEN BENTHORNE — His charming young wife. WILLIAM ALSTON — Benthorne's father-in-law and business associate. JOEY DI TORIO — Night club owner and gangster. ARA JOHNSON — The mystery girl. JOHN DOUGLAS — A young mining engineer, in love with Ara. CAPTAIN DAWSON — A detective who likes to listen.

Yesterday, Douglas pleads for a chance to talk to Ara alone. When Dawson arranges it, Douglas shows the girl a button from her dress. "I found it in Benthorne's study. Were you there?" She admits she saw Benthorne but insists it was early in the evening, long before he was killed.

CHAPTER XI Helen Benthorne led Dawson toward the back stairs. "You asked how my father got into the house," she said, pointing to the doorway across the kitchen. "He came in there, met Jameson in the hallway, and then came up the stairs to the left. Jameson's quarters open off the kitchen to the right."

Dawson glanced backward for a moment. On the other side of the swinging door he had just passed through was the dining room, and beyond that the study. If a man hurried—ran—

He followed Mrs. Benthorne up the stairs. "Here is the landing where father paused to catch his breath—" Noting Dawson's quizzical look, she added, "Oh yes, Captain, I forgot to tell you. I talked to father after he had seen you. He told me all that he had said." She hurried on, her black gown swishing about her trim ankles.

Dawson hesitated as he reached the top of the stairs, eyed a small door recessed in the wall. "The clothes chute," Helen Benthorne explained. "A most convenient place to hide a gun."

"I'd thought of that already. Mr. Benthorne," Dawson smiled. "Krone emptied it fully two hours ago."

"Do you really think you'll find that gun here in the house, Captain?" Helen Benthorne seemed amused at the thought. "I should think you'd be searching the grounds. Undoubtedly the murderer of my husband went out the window. While you waste time here, he's probably miles away."

"Mr. Benthorne had many enemies?" "Arnold had no friends." She opened a door. "This is the guest room"—and nodding at the figure on the ruffled bed.

"Poor Dad!" The detective pushed past her, through the doorway. He took in the disarray of the room; the spread tossed back over the foot of the bed; the muddy shoes, side by side; the black raincoat in a heap on the floor; the hat, on the highboy; and the little line of water down the front of the drawers; the figure of Alston stretched full length upon the bed, face down, outlined under the blanket. The man's breathing was steady, unnaturally loud.

"The sleeping pills," Mrs. Benthorne explained. "Must you disturb him now? This has been an ordeal for him. Won't you let him sleep and come back later?" Dawson nodded, backed slowly from the room. Alston stirred slightly, then relaxed again, resuming his quiet snoring. Dawson turned to Mrs. Benthorne's suite.

Twenty minutes later he was ready to admit that if Helen Benthorne had ever kept a revolver hidden in her room, she had left no trace of it. There was no tell-tale outline on flimsy underthings in any of the dressed drawers; closets, filled with hundreds of dol-

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Colony Nearer Independence Goal

PALMER, Alaska, Dec. 13.—(AP)—Out of the frozen hopes of an unseasonal early fall snowstorm, farmers in Uncle Sam's Matanuska colony announced today another step toward economic independence.

The Matanuska Valley Farmers' cooperative reported the purchase of all inventory stock in the colony trading post and warehouse, which together do an annual gross business of \$250,000.

Negotiations were announced under way also for the co-op to take over all units in Palmer's "civic center." The government-financed Alaska rural rehabilitation corporation has been the operator since the colony was founded as an economic and social experiment with distressed farm families from the mid-west four years ago.

The latest moves followed the co-op's assumption in July of the creamery, produce and meat departments, and the statement by Co-op Manager L. C. Stock that "we must completely divorce the project from government relief."

"I anticipate that it will take five years more to place this project on a firm foundation with the proper volume of farm produce required to make the farms self-supporting and on a paying basis," he added today.

Well, Well! PONTOTOC, Miss.—Mrs. Cecill McKnight heard a faint cry that sounded like the voice of her two-and-a-half-year-old son, Keith. She rushed from the house into the yard and peered down 54 feet to the muddy bottom of an empty well.

"Are you down there Keith?" she queried. "Yes, and I'm dirty, too," the boy answered complacently.

"I awakened suddenly, with an idea," Alston explained. "I came down quietly, and I think I found something you'll want to see." He handed the detective a smudged, water-stained cigarette, half burned and crushed. "Most interesting," he went on slowly, his breath rasping in his throat.

"What—" The words died in his throat. "Were you looking for me, Captain Dawson?" The door of Benthorne's private hallway to the street opened and Alston emerged from the long corridor. The detective stared at him, open-mouthed.

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"Not right away," Dawson said. "I'll have to awaken your father now. Or would you rather?" Helen Benthorne led the way. There was a queenly pride in her erect carriage, a calm defiance in her manner that easily explained Arnold Benthorne's longing to have this woman for his wife, and to take any means to force her into that marriage.

Helen Benthorne was an aristocrat, Dawson knew, and her manners never allowed anyone to forget it. She opened the door to the guest room gently, then threw it wide with a crash. "My father is gone!" she screamed. Dawson darted into the room.

It was true. The bed was empty, the covers thrown back. The shoes were still there, neatly placed side by side, half under the bed. Dawson rushed to the head of the front staircase, searched the hallway and entrance beneath.

"Krone! Krone!" he shouted, and as the patrolman rushed through the half-open front door, watch this stairway and the hall here. Stop everyone. I'm coming down the back way."

Douglas and Ara were still at the table when Dawson pushed through the swinging door. "Anyone go through here in the last 20 minutes?" "No! A soul, Captain," Douglas answered. "What's the matter now?" But Dawson had hurried on.

The detective bumped into Krone a second later at the door of the study. "What is it, Captain?" "Alston—he's disappeared!" "But he was upstairs, sleeping." "Yes—yes—I saw him not 20 minutes ago, sound asleep. But he's not there now. Did you see him come down the stairs?" "I'd just stepped outside with Joey for a smoke—I'd have heard him."

"He left his shoes by the bed—What were you doing outside?" Dawson thundered. "Search the house. Call in a couple of those men on duty in front—get me a dozen more. Where's Flynn?"

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Vet Wouldn't Ban Teaching of "isms"

PENDLETON, Dec. 12.—(AP)—The Veterans of Foreign Wars believe in the "willingness-to-fight sort of Americanism but do not agree with those who would suppress the teaching of communism, nazism or fascism in this country."

State Junior Vice Commander O. J. Johnson, Pendleton, declared today. "The United States," the V. F. W. official said in a membership campaign statement, "is founded on freedom of speech, the press and religion and to deny expression would be to say our American bill of rights should be repealed. As long as we are free to say, to print and to worship as we please our democracy will survive and we need have no fear of the crackpots

who would yoke the man for the grandeur of the state. . . of course we are opposed to those "state-is-everything" philo-sophies but let them stand out in the light of reason—the sunlight of freedom—and shrink."

Johnson said that the V.F.W. in a current membership drive would "not welcome un-American eligibles but certainly will welcome those who think for themselves, whether or not that thinking suggests revision in methods of gov-

ernment—just so it does not fetter the right of every man and woman to be free souls within the constitution."

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